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Yuzuru Hanyu performs his short program during the men's figure skating competition at the Pyeongchang Olympics on Friday in Gangneung, South Korea. Top right: Shoma Uno jumps during his performance on Friday. Bottom right: Flower girls collect Winnie the Pooh plush toys thrown onto the rink after Hanyu's performance, which garnered an Olympic-record 111.68 points. AFP-JIJI, AP



# Dazzling Hanyu takes command

Star sets new Olympic short-program record in bid to defend title

JACK GALLAGHER  
GANGNEUNG, SOUTH KOREA  
STAFF WRITER

In incredibly dramatic fashion, Yuzuru Hanyu rose to the occasion in the short program at Gangneung Ice Arena on Friday afternoon.

Hanyu's score of 111.68 points, an Olympic record for the short program, has him in first place heading into Saturday's free skate and halfway to skating immortality.

It has been 66 years since American Dick Button won the second of his two consecutive gold medals at the 1952 Oslo Games, a

feat Hanyu can equal with a victory here.

The reigning Olympic champion skated a fantastic program to Chopin's Ballade No. 1 under the most intense pressure imaginable. He opened with a quad salchow, executed a great triple axel, and then topped it off with an amazing quad toe loop/triple toe loop combination jump.

In front of an audience that included a large number of Japanese fans, Hanyu was exquisite from start to finish. His poise in the face of all the questions surrounding the right ankle injury he suffered three months ago was absolutely phenomenal. He just didn't blink.

Hanyu went through one element after another with the style and panache we

have come to expect from the skating giant, earning massive roars from the crowd as he ticked off each one. When it was over, the ice was enveloped in Winnie the Pooh soft toys.

The 23-year-old put on a majestic show for the ages. It was a superb exhibition of technique and showmanship that left many in attendance in awe of Hanyu's combination of power, grace and artistic prowess.

"I just felt happy to skate," Hanyu stated. "I just felt satisfied with my every element. I am really happy because I was really feeling the music, too, and the ice."

When asked about his comeback from the injury, Hanyu talked about his contentment. "Just doing my best," Hanyu commented. "I wanted to say to everyone that I am back here. And I am really happy today. I just want to say thank you for cheering and I am back."

Hanyu's winning score in the short program at Sochi was a world record

MEDAL STANDINGS				
	G	S	B	T
Germany	9	2	4	15
Norway	6	8	5	19
Netherlands	5	5	2	12
United States	5	1	2	8
Canada	4	5	4	13
Sweden	4	2	0	6
France	3	2	2	7
Japan	0	4	3	7

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Results as of press time on Friday

of 101.45. Hanyu had a lead of nearly four points going into the free skate in 2014. His lead here is slightly larger.

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## BOJ governor gets more time to battle deflation 'Bazooka-wielding' Kuroda nominated for a second term

AFP-JIJI, KYODO

The government Friday nominated Haruhiko Kuroda for a second term as central bank governor, handing the veteran finance chief more time to battle deflation and kick-start the world's No. 3 economy.

Kuroda's nomination was among those submitted to the Diet in a document seen by reporters, and had been widely expected.

The government also nominated BOJ Executive Director Masayoshi Amamiya, seen as playing a critical role in crafting easing policy under Kuroda, and Waseda University Professor Masazumi Wakatabe as BOJ deputy governors.

Handpicked by Shinzo Abe to steer the former economic powerhouse out of a dangerous cycle of falling prices, Kuroda has guided the key monetary plank of the prime minister's vaunted Abenomics economic policy. Now 73, the former president of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is on course to become the longest-serving Bank of Japan governor ever on completion of his second five-year term.

Kuroda took the helm in March 2013, with a mandate to deploy what was called a monetary "bazooka" to breathe life into the nation's moribund economy. He has overseen a policy of ultra-aggressive monetary easing, adopting in January 2016 the BOJ's first-ever policy of negative interest rates — effectively charging lenders to park their cash at the central bank. The BOJ has also pledged to keep the yield on 10-year government bonds around zero by buying as many as necessary.

A perennial optimist in the long-running war against deflation, Kuroda once famously invoked the spirit of Peter Pan, the boy who never grew up. "I trust that many of you are familiar with the story of Peter Pan, in which it says, 'The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease forever to be able to do it,'" he said in a 2015 speech about monetary policy. "Yes, what we need is a positive attitude and conviction. Indeed, each time central banks have been confronted with a wide range of problems, they have overcome the problems by conceiving new solutions," he said. However, it takes more than a bullish attitude to tame deflation and Kuroda

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has failed in his mission to hit the inflation target of 2 percent — the most recent figure was 0.9 percent in December. But he can point to more success recently on the GDP front, with the country currently enjoying its longest unbroken spell of quarterly growth since the bubble days of the late 1980s.

Kuroda must still win Diet approval. He faces hearings as soon as next week. He will likely come under fire from some opposition lawmakers, who say the government's massive bond purchases have left the country vulnerable and that the BOJ's negative interest rate policy hurt the profitability of banks.

Critics also charge that his monetary easing has pushed down the value of the yen, making the recovery too export-led.

Market experts say that with inflationary shoots beginning to spring forth and the economy picking up, Kuroda's greatest future challenge will be to exit the easing policy. For now, Kuroda has pledged to stay the course.

"Our country's economy is gradually expanding but on the other hand price movements are weak," he told the Diet on Friday, shortly before his nomination was announced. "Considering there is some distance to the 2 percent price-stabilization target, it's not the time ... for an exit from government bond-buying."

"The Bank of Japan needs patiently to continue the current powerful monetary easing," he added.

Economists said the government is sticking with a safe pair of hands at a time when other global central banks are weighing how to move safely away from ultra-loose monetary policies that were crafted from the ruins of the subprime mortgage crisis.

His reappointment "implies an emphasis on 'continuity' over 'change' in policy conduct, ahead of the government's expected declaration of an end to deflation around mid-year, and 'stability' over 'volatility' in the financial markets," Tetsufumi Yamakawa of Barclays Securities said in a report.



Haruhiko Kuroda  
AFP-JIJI

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## Government OKs pension age hike to 71

KYODO

The government on Friday approved an outline for raising the optional age for tapping public pensions to 71 or older to address the national labor shortage stemming from Japan's falling birthrate and rapidly graying population.

The ministry will consider revising the related laws in fiscal 2020 to encourage people in their 60s or older to continue working.

The ministry's outline notes that older adults are physically healthier than previous generations and are highly motivated to continue working or participate in community activities.

In addition, the outline says the government will review the "standardization of life stages according to age categories."

"Depopulation in rural areas is expected as the pace of aging picks up. It is important to realize a society where people of all generations can widely and actively participate," Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said during a meeting on the issue Friday.

After studying next year's pension financ-

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe speaks during a Tokyo conference on the aging of society at the Prime Minister's Office on Friday. KYODO

"We will earnestly consider expanding options," health minister Katsunobu Kato told a news conference.

But Kato ruled out the possibility of the pension collection age, which is currently set at 65 in principle, being hiked uniformly.

The government is looking to back the idea of companies raising their retirement ages or extending post-retirement employment.

It will also consider providing support for people who start their own businesses and promote telecommuting.

The government will also support the development of advanced technologies, such as automated driving systems and nursing robots, to help the elderly work.

The outline, which is reviewed roughly every five years, also set a range of numerical targets. These include goals to reduce the number of drivers 80 or older killed in traffic accidents to below 200 by 2020, compared with 266 in 2016, and raise the employment rate for people between 60 and 64 to 67.0 percent by 2020, compared with the current 63.6 percent.

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